



Comprehensive Plan Update

Frequently Asked Questions

WHAT IS THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN?

Comprehensive plans are the centerpiece of local planning efforts. A comprehensive plan articulates a series of goals and policies that are intended to guide the decisions of elected officials and local government staff. The Comprehensive Plan provides long range policy direction for land use, transportation, economic development, housing, capital facilities, utilities, parks and recreation, and natural environment. It lays out a community vision and priorities and describes, where, how, and in some cases when development should occur. Poulsbo's first GMA Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 1994. Periodic updates have occurred since, with the last update taking place in 2016.

WHAT IS THE GROWTH MANAGEMENT ACT?

The Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA) is a state law that requires state and local governments to manage Washington's growth by identifying and protecting critical areas and natural resource lands, designating urban growth areas, preparing comprehensive plans and implementing them through capital investments and development regulations. This approach to growth management is unique among states. The GMA was adopted by the Legislature in 1990 ([Chapter 36.70A RCW](#)).

The GMA was adopted because the Washington State Legislature found that uncoordinated and unplanned growth posed a threat to the environment, sustainable economic development and the quality of life in Washington. The central premise of the GMA is that spontaneous and unstructured growth and development is wasteful of our natural resource base and costly to the provision of public services and facilities. By managing growth and development, the negative effects can be minimized, and the benefits can be maximized.

WHY DO WE NEED A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN?

Cities need a comprehensive plan to ensure that decisions made today will result in efficient and sustainable growth in the future. Policies contained in comprehensive plans are meant to ensure orderly growth and protect the public's best interests. As cities grow, having a comprehensive plan in place enables local governments to identify and respond to changing community needs and desires in a thoughtful rather than reactive way.

WHAT DRIVES UPDATES AND/OR AMENDMENTS TO THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN?

The Growth Management Act requires that cities and counties update their Comprehensive Plans on a periodic schedule. This is an opportunity to revise population and employment growth forecasts with the most up to date data, review existing policies to ensure they make sense for the communities they serve, write new policies that reflect the priorities of the community, and confirm that all federal, state, and local requirements are met. The next update of the Comprehensive Plan is due December 30, 2024. The 2024 Update will plan for the next 20 years of population and employment growth through the year 2044.

DOES THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN ADDRESS TRANSPORTATION, WATER AND SEWER INFRASTRUCTURE?

Yes. The process of identifying current capital facility needs, future needs to serve the growth anticipated in the comprehensive plan, and how to fund them, is an important aspect of planning under the Growth Management Act. The capital facilities plan (CFP) includes a six-year capital improvement plan (CIP) which should align with the jurisdiction's budget, and a longer-range (20-year) CFP of capital projects, with estimated costs and proposed methods of financing. The CFP provides for the full implementation of the land use plan by showing how public facilities and services will be provided for in the community, at the population and intensities of development envisioned in the plan, and at adopted levels of service.

WHY SHOULD I BE AWARE OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE?

The Comprehensive Plan is the fundamental document in which the city relies on to guide land use decisions. The Comprehensive Plan includes designations describing the type of development expected in certain areas. These designations are the basis of all Zoning Districts and form the set of regulations with which all land use applications must comply. Simply put, the Comprehensive Plan is the blueprint for how the community of Poulsbo will grow.

CAN A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN BE CHANGED ONCE IT IS ADOPTED?

Yes. Per state law, proposed amendments to the comprehensive plan can be considered once per year. All proposals are considered at the same time so the cumulative effect of the various proposals can be determined.



WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AND THE ZONING ORDINANCE?

The Comprehensive Plan is a policy document that guides general land use patterns. The Zoning Ordinance is part of the Poulsbo Municipal Code and regulates the type, scale and intensity of development which may occur in the specific zoning districts.

WHAT ARE THE COUNTYWIDE PLANNING POLICIES?

Under RCW 36.70A.210, GMA requires that counties (along with cities) adopt countywide planning policies (CPPs) to establish a regional, countywide policy framework under which county and city comprehensive plans are developed and must be consistent with. The [Kitsap Regional Coordinating Council](#) (KRCC) is the regional body in Kitsap County in charge of developing, updating, and maintaining the CPPs for Kitsap County and its cities. KRCC is comprised of elected officials from Kitsap County, the Cities of Bainbridge Island, Bremerton, Port Orchard and Poulsbo, and the Suquamish and Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribes. KRCC also includes representation from the United States Navy, Kitsap Transit, and the Ports of Bremerton and Kingston.

WHAT IS THE BUILDABLE LANDS REPORT?

The Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA) requires the state's fastest growing counties to periodically review and evaluate development trends to ensure consistency with GMA, countywide planning policies, and comprehensive plans (RCW 36.70A.215). This review and evaluation is commonly known as the "Buildable Lands Program" and applies to seven counties, including Kitsap County and the cities of Bainbridge Island, Poulsbo, Bremerton and Port Orchard. The main deliverable of the program is the Buildable Lands Report (BLR).

Kitsap County and the cities within have compiled a total of four BLRs. The [2021 Buildable Lands Report](#) evaluates growth trends between 2013-2019 timeframe. Previous reports were published in 2002, 2007, and 2014.

WHAT IS PUGET SOUND REGIONAL COUNCIL AND VISION 2050?

PSRC stands for Puget Sound Regional Council, which is an organization that provides a forum for cities, counties, and other area agencies to address regional issues and develop policies for growth, transportation, and economic development. Four counties (King, Snohomish, Pierce, and Kitsap) and 80 cities are represented at PSRC. This regional organization facilitates coordinated policymaking among neighboring jurisdictions and helps foster a regional that functions as a coherent whole.

[Vision 2050](#) is a long-range planning document produced by PSRC and informed by public input that provides Multicounty Planning Policies (MCPs) and a regional strategy for accommodating the growth anticipated for the region by 2050, currently estimated at 1.8 million additional people and 1.2 million new jobs.

The City's comprehensive plan is required to be consistent with the MCPs in Vision 2050. Vision 2050 does not prescribe specific development projects or codes, but rather sets a general policy direction for counties and cities.

WHAT IS A GROWTH TARGET AND WHERE DOES IT COME FROM?

The GMA requires cities to accommodate future housing and employment growth based on countywide planning policies and 20-year population forecasts. Counties, in consultation with cities, adopt 20-year "growth targets" for cities within the county. Cities need to plan for additional housing and employment, but there is no requirement from the GMA that housing and workplaces actually be built—the requirement is only that the City's zoning provides enough capacity to allow growth targets to be met.

